



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2010

## *House of Representatives*

### AN HONOR TO WORK FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS!

**HON. BOB FILNER**

OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES

I have had the honor and privilege of chairing the Veterans' Affairs Committee for the last 4 years. The voters of this Nation have changed the party in charge, and so I think this will probably be my last day speaking as the chairman. I want to thank the veterans of this Nation from around the country and around the world. I have met with them. They have changed me as a person. I have learned incredible amounts from them. I have learned how much we have to do to fulfill our commitment to our Nation's veterans.

I think we have done a lot in this committee for the last 4 years. Some of our staff is here, and I want to thank them because they have made it all possible. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have a fellow from the Military Fellows Program who worked with us for a year, as the Speaker set up for us, to bring in the military folks from different services and from different occupations to both help us and to help them with a year on Capitol Hill. One of those is completing his year just about now, Ricco Player. We want to thank you, Ricco, for all of your work. As a marine, he is going to be deployed to Afghanistan after Christmas, so we wish him the best and we want to thank him for his work. He has taught us a lot, and I hope that he will bring back some of our knowledge to his fellow marines.

In the last 4 years, Mr. Speaker, we have added almost \$25 billion to the health care needs of our veterans. That is over a 65 percent increase. That is unprecedented in the history of the VA to have such an increase, and we needed to do that. We have literally hundreds of thousands of new veterans, many with brain injury, many with PTSD, post-traumatic

stress disorder. We have veterans from the Vietnam War who are aging, and from earlier wars, obviously. So we have tremendous need, and we put in billions of dollars into especially mental health care of our Nation's veterans.

We wrote a GI bill for the 21st century which matched the GI bill from 1944, the original GI bill. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I'm here because of the GI Bill. My dad came back from the war. He got some education, and we were able to buy a house. We were middle class for the first time in our lives because of the GI Bill, like 8 million other families who took advantage of that opportunity.

We have brought those benefits in line to what it really costs to go to college. As you have seen today, we have worked for homeless veterans, and we have worked for women veterans. We have tried to improve access for rural veterans. We have done quite a bit.

I am looking forward to working with our counterparts in the new Congress to continue the progress that we have made for veterans. We intend to cooperate fully. Mr. Roe has been very good to work with. I am not sure who the chairman will be from your side, but we have established, I think, good working relationships with nearly every member of this committee.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank again the staff of our committee. I want to thank the staffs on both sides of the aisle for their work and for doing so much for veterans during the last 4 years.